NO MATTER WHAT...
I WANT TO GET IT, NO MATTER WHAT...
NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES.
I WANT THAT.
UH. UH..
I WANT...
密約
とうしの爪&円屋櫻英
新作のコラボレーション漫画!!
SHIMEI TOUSHI & KAL MARUYA
Secret Agreement

Gasp
Eddi

TICK
TOCK
IT'S STILL TWO O'CLOCK?
CREAK
clunk
NO GUESTS ARE COMING TODAY?

WORSE
I DIDN'T INTEND TO FALL ASLEEP
drape
I'M PRETTY SWEATY
TO WAKE UP FROM A NIGHTMARE
THAT DREAM AGAIN
IT'S
ALSO

I WANT IT.
NO MATTER WHAT.
I WANT TO GET IT,
NO MATTER WHAT...
NO MATTER
WHAT IT TAKES
TO
DREAM
ABOUT
THIS...
SO MANY
TIMES...

THANK YOU FOR THE TEA
I'LL RECEIVE THIS

THE TEA WAS EXCELLENT
IORI-SAMA
WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE MORE?

THANK YOU
HISAYO-SAMA.
WHAT WOULD BE AN APPROPRIATE DATE FOR THE CEREMONY?

HOWEVER, IN THIS BEAUTIFUL GARDEN
FOR SOME REASON, I'M WALKING ALONG, TOGETHER WITH AMEYAMI-SENSEI.

IT'S THE SAME FOR ME.
THE FAMOUS WRITER AMEYAMA KYUUSAI-DAISENSEI, IS WORRIED ABOUT THE NEW EDITOR IN CHARGE
SO HE CHOOSES TO MEET IN A REFRESHING AND BEAUTIFUL PLACE
BUT WITH MIYASAKA-KUN'S WORDS...
YOU WANTED TO MEET IN A BEAUTIFUL JAPANESE-STYLE GARDEN. WE DIDN'T HAVE TO GO OUT OF OUR WAY TO CHANGE TRAINS AND COME HERE.
THERE'S A FAMOUS JAPANESE-STYLE GARDEN NEAR THE EDITOR'S OFFICE
I RETURN YOUR WORDS, AMEYAMA-SENSEI!

MEJIRO GARDEN? THAT'S TRUE BUT FROM THERE, I CAN'T WISH TO MOUNT FUJI
He's the type where you can't tell if he really means what he says

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HE IS...
WHAT A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG MAN. IT'S LIKE HE'S FROM ANOTHER WORLD
WALKING FROM THAT DIRECTION MEANS THEY'RE COMING BACK FROM THE TEA ROOM
THERE'S ALSO A TEA ROOM HERE?
YES, YES
ONE THAT IS LUCKY AND FAMOUS.

WHAT WAS THAT?
MAYBE YOU'LL NEED THAT ROOM IN THE FUTURE.
NO.
NOT MAYBE, YOU'LL NEED IT FOR SURE.
LUCKY?
NEVERTHELESS, WHAT BEAUTY LIKE SOMETHING YOU ONLY SEE IN MOVIES
He
Please don't tease me
IT'S JUST LIKE WHAT MIYASAKA-KUN SAID.
HE COULD BE FROM ANOTHER WORLD TAKING HUMAN FORM.

YOU DID THAT ON PURPOSE DIDN'T YOU?
What are you doing today?
IT'S BECAUSE YOU SCARE SO EASILY JUST OVER SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
HOW WILL YOU BE ABLE TO EDIT MY WORK? I WRITE MYSTERIES.
Hahaha
I'll do it because it's my job.
bow

DO YOU KNOW E. CH OTHER, SENSEI?
EH?
NO, NOT AT ALL.
THIS IS OUR FIRST MEETING
.....

IT'S A PRESENT FOR MY CUTE NEPHEW
LOOK.
IF WE'RE TALKING ABOUT FUJIMIROU, THEN IT'S THEIR FAMOUS LEMON PIE.
EVERYONE KNOWS...
THAT FUJIMIROU'S LEMON PIE IS SUPERB, UNCLE KYUUSAI

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO WITH ALL THIS PIE?
AN EDITOR WITH A SMALL SALARY WAS NICE ENOUGH TO BUY IT
JUST DON'T WASTE IT.
I DON'T EAT SWEETS
Then why did you let him buy it?
IF HE FINDS OUT THAT YOU BROUGHT IT TO MY PLACE HE'LL BE DISAPPOINTED.
I THINK HE BOUGHT THAT FOR YOU.
BECAUSE YOU'RE ABNORMAL.
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE IN THE FAMILY WHO LIKES SWEETS, YUUICHI.

IT'S AN IMAGINARY FAMILY THAT I DON'T KNOW.
SINCE I WAS BORN
I'VE NEVER MET ANY OTHER RELATIVE BESIDES UNCLE KYUUSAI. I'VE NEVER HEARD ANY STORIES ABOUT THEM
THE ONLY THING I KNOW IS MY PARENTS' GRAVE.
YOU'RE CRUEL TO CALL ME ABNORMAL JUST BECAUSE I HAVE SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT TASTES
WITHOUT UNCLE, I WOULD HAVE NO FAMILY.
UNCLE...
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, YUUICHI.
YOU CAN DIVIDE IT UP FOR TOMORROW'S BREAKFAST, LUNCH AND DINNER.
Hahaha

I MET WITH HANAYASHIKI'S SON UNEXPECTEDLY IN THE GARDEN.
IN FUJIMIROU?
YEAH.
YOU SEEM TO HAVE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH A TROUBLESOME PARTNER AGAIN.
I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE THE TYPE ATTRACTED BY LOOKS.

THEY WERE HIS MOTHER AND OLDER SISTER
AND HISAYO-SAMA, FROM THE YONEKURA FAMILY WHO OWNS A NUMBER OF MANORS WITH HER NEICE
AND WHILE YOUR EXISTENCE IS TROUBLED TOO...
I SAW HIM COMING FROM THE TEA ROOM,
ACCOMPANIED BY TWO YOUNG LADIES AND TWO YOUNG GIRLS

THE YONEKURA FAMILY...
FROM FUJIMIROU'S TEA ROOM.
I SEE...
THAT TEA ROOM SEEMS TO HAVE A PROPER HISTORY.
IN THAT SMALL ROOM, DON'T YOU THINK FIVE PEOPLE SITTING TOGETHER WOULD BE CROWDED?
I SUPPOSE SO
IT LOOKS LIKE A SUITABLE PLACE FOR AN OMIAI"
YOU'RE RIGHT
IF SOMEONE HAS AN OMIAI THERE, THE RELATIONSHIP TENDS TO GO SMOOTHLY, DOESN'T IT?
I ALSO KNOW ABOUT THAT

Custom where by unattached individuals reintroduced for another to consider the possibility of marriage.

IT DOESN'T CHANGE ANYTHING.
I WON'T STOP HIM.
BUT I ALSO CAN'T SUPPORT HIM.
TELLING YOU WAS UNNECESSARY THEN.
YUUICHI HANDLES HIS OCCUPATION WITH CONSIDERATION
DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE OMIAI FROM HIM?
NO.
BUT,
WHETHER HE TOLD ME OR NOT...

I JUST WANTED TO TEASE YOU A LITTLE.
DON'T LOOK SO DOWN, YUUICHI.
PAT PAT
SORRY.
TO HAVE A OMAI IN FUJIMOROU'S TEA ROOM DOESN'T ALWAYS MEAN IT WILL GO SMOOTHLY
IT WILL
YUUICHI!
IT'S OKAY.
I'M SORRY THAT I MADE YOU WORRY, UNCLE

I'M ALL RIGHT
I ALWAYS THOUGHT THIS DAY WOULD COME
IS IT BECAUSE DESPITE BEING AN OLD FAMILY, HANAYASHIKI IS HAVING FINANCIAL PROBLEMS?
THAT'S RIGHT
THEY'VE BEEN HAVING TROUBLE FOR YEARS
AND I DON'T THINK THE YONEKURA FAMILY KNOWS THE HANAYASHIKI FAMILY'S PROBLEMS
IF THEY DO, THEN THE OMIAI IS JUST A RITE OF PASSAGE
IF IT WERE BASED ON JUST REPUTATION THEN THE HANAYASHIKI FAMILY'S IS HIGHER
THE FAMILY'S SOCIAL STATUSES ARE SO SUIT EACH OTHER

IT CAN'T BE HELPED THAT HANAYASHIKI ISN'T A FAMILY WITH LARGE ASSETS LIKE YONEKURA
AT ANY RATE, THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO
ALSO,
IF THEY HAVE A WEDDING WITH AN ENORMOUS DOWRY FROM THE YONEKURA FAMILY
IT WOULDN'T BE A BAD THING FOR EITHER FAMILY
AFTER YOU'VE TRIED THE PIE, LET ME KNOW WHAT YOU THINK
IS THAT SO?
HUH?
WHAT'S WITH THE SUDDEN CHANGE OF TOPIC?

AT A TIME LIKE THIS I CAN STILL BE SAVED BY UNCLE'S FACE
THEN PLEASE BRING IT HOME WITH YOU
AFTER SPENDING ALL THAT MONEY, MY EDITOR, MIYASAKA-KUN, WANTS TO KNOW. NO MATTER WHAT
WOULDN'T IT BE BETTER IF YOU ATE THIS TOGETHER WITH MIYASAKA-KUN?
I DON'T NEED IT
I DON'T WANT TO SHORTEN MY LIFESPAN
IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN SERVE IT IN PLACE OF TEACAKES WHEN YOU HAVE A GUEST
IT'S THE FAMOUS FUJIMIROU LEMON PIE. THEY WOULD BE HAPPY.
WHO KNOWS, MAYBE IT WILL HELP RAISE YOUR COMMISSION
YOU KNOW THAT WON'T HAPPEN

WELL THEN
CLOSE

VRR mmm
TAP
TAP
CREAK
EXCUSE ME.

I DID BUT THERE'S NO REASON FOR ME TO TALK ABOUT IT.
WHAT?
DIDN'T YOU HAVE AN OMIAI?
WHAT'S THAT PACKAGE?
THEN LET ME REPHRASE THAT
THUD

SELL IT

WHY?
THAT'S NOT WHY
RUMOR IS YOU'RE MARRYING INTO MONEY.
HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO EXPLAIN?
YOU CAN SELL TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER, BETTER THAN ANY OTHER MIDDLEMAN.
NOW YOU DON'T HAVE TO SELL YOUR FAMILY HEIRLOOM, RIGHT?

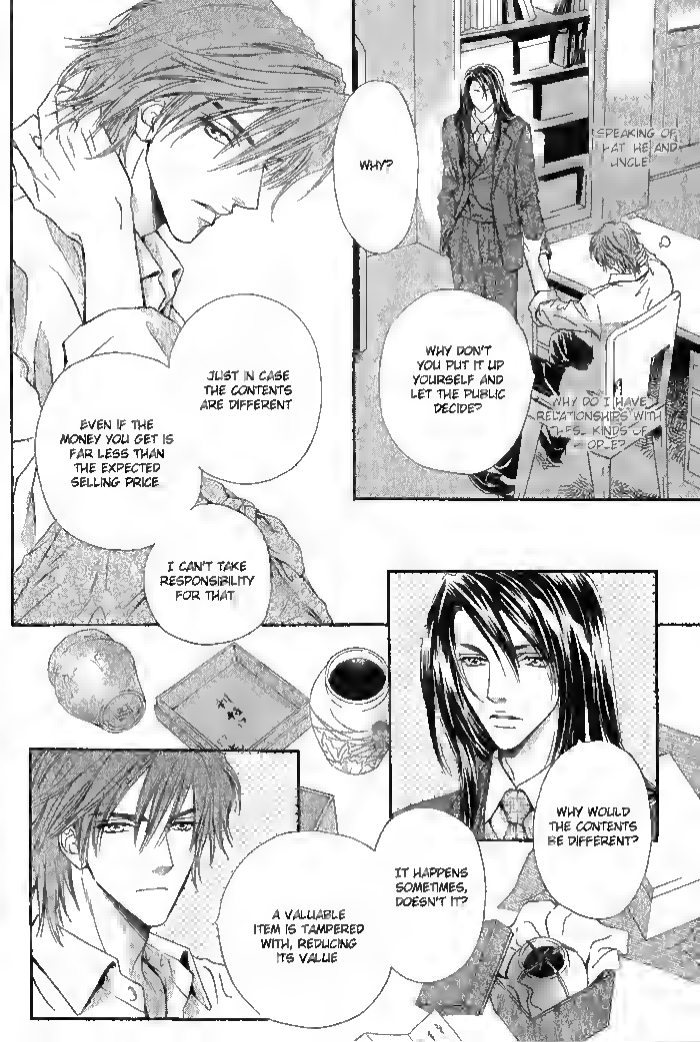
<sfx: rustle>

WHAT?
HEY HEY. IT'S IMPROPER, YOU KNOW YOUNG MASTER.
SUDDENLY STRADDLING MAN'S LAP?
Just like this.
HMMM.
BESIDES, IS THIS ANY WAY FOR A PERSON WHO'S JUST DECIDED ON HIS MARRIAGE PARTNER TO BEHAVE?

I WANT TO DO IT NOW.
THIS IS WHY... IORI
DIDN'T YOU SAY IT WAS OKAY TO DO IT ANYTIME?
I DID SAY THAT.
I UNDER-STAND
I WANT YOU TO FIND A BUYER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
THE COMMISSION IS THE USUAL
WAIT
I HAVEN'T EVEN CONFIRMED THE GOODS YET
WHY ARE YOU IN A HURRY TO SELL IT?

NINSEI'S URN
HUH?
IT'S A NINSEI URN
AGAIN?
YES
IORI.
THIS IS SOMETHING YOU NEED TO REMEMBER TO WORK ON
EVEN THOUGH HANAYASHIKI IS AN OLD FAMILY WITH A GOOD REPUTATION,
THAT DOESN'T MEAN THEY HAVE NUMEROUS NINSEI WORKS IN THEIR POSSESSION SCATTERED AROUND.

IORI...
YOU CAN CHECK THE CONTENTS IF YOU WANT.
THEN IT'S AN OLD URN MADE BY SOMEONE ELSE.
CAN YOU TAKE THE TROUBLE TO READ THE NOTE OF AUTHENTICATION ONCE IN A WHILE?
IT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT I WANT YOU TO SELL IT
BUT, WHETHER YOU CHECK THE CONTENTS OR NOT...
HIS THEORIES
HE HAS HIS OWN STYLE...
IT'S THE USUAL THING, BUT YOU...
THAT'S TRUE.


SPEAKING OF, WHAT HE AND UNCLE
WHY?
WHY DON'T YOU PUT IT UP YOURSELF AND LET THE PUBLIC DECIDE?
WHY DO I HAVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THESE KINDS OF PEOPLE?
JUST IN CASE THE CONTENTS ARE DIFFERENT
EVEN IF THE MONEY YOU GET IS FAR LESS THAN THE EXPECTED SELLING PRICE
I CAN'T TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THAT
WHY WOULD THE CONTENTS BE DIFFERENT?
IT HAPPENS SOMETIMES, DOESN'T IT?
A VALUABLE ITEM IS TAMPERED WITH, REDUCING ITS VALUE

YUUICHI ALSO DOES THIS?
I DON'T.
WHO WOULD DO THAT INTENTIONALLY?
WELL, THERE ARE A LOT OF CASES...
THEN IT'S ALL RIGHT.
IF YUUICHI DOESN'T DO THAT

WHISPER
AND YOU DON'T KNOW MY FEELINGS
HE'S REALLY—
IS IT OKAY IF IT GETS CANCELLED? IF THEY FIND YOU COMING HOME IN THE MORNING?
THEY WON'T CANCEL IT EVEN IF THEY FIND OUT
THEN IT'S OKAY
BUT,
YOU DON'T SEEM LIKE YOU WANT TO DO IT TONIGHT

PULL

CHANGED YOUR MIND?
DON'T GO
IORI
YEAH

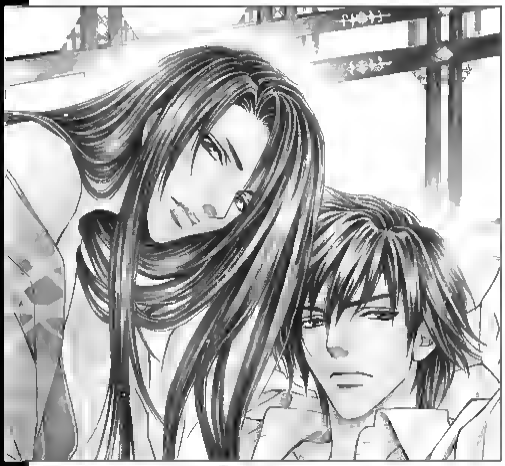
Mmmm
Nn
Nn
Ahn
LOSEN

As if the truth about the omiai is nothing but fiction, the passionate night of secret mating advances...

Chara End

Secret Agreement

GOTOU SHINOBU & MARUYA KAE



scanner meanne77 trans rayquo editor kikureru qe'er firecrest & tokki

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creak
AH...
creak
MM...
HA... AH!
creak
creak

SO?
WHEN'S THE CEREMONY?
NN-?
TOMORROW...

whaat!?
drop
ARE YOU TAKING THIS SERIOUSLY?
creak..
TOMOR-ROW?
TODAY THE *MIAI — TOMORROW THE CEREMONY?
THERE ISN'T MUCH TO BE SURPRISED ABOUT

TODAY'S MIAI WAS DECIDING THE PREMISES OF THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY.
FOR THE SAKE OF THEIR REPUTATION, THEY HELD A PUBLIC MIAI.
I KNOW THEY WOULD HAVE SKIPPED STRAIGHT INTO THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY.
BUT IF IT WERE POSSIBLE...
ALL RIGHT, I GET IT.
JUST ONE THING, IORI...
YOU DON'T CARE A BIT ABOUT WHAT KIND OF "TOMORROW" TODAY WILL LEAD YOU TO.
ARE YOU OKAY DOING SOMETHING LIKE THIS, WHEN YOUR CEREMONY IS TOMORROW!?

WELL THAT'S TRUE, BUT...
THE CEREMONY IS NOT TONIGHT
...THAT'S NOT THE POINT!
I'M ASKING IF YOU SHOULD BE DOING THIS THE NIGHT BEFORE YOU MARRY.
THEN SHOULD I DO IT AFTER THE CEREMONY?

...ffle
...ffle
Hmm..
WELL,
THAT WOULD BE A BIGGER PROBLEM
AFTER THE CEREMONY, THERE WILL BE A PARTY IN THE GARDEN THAT IS BEHIND THE MANSION.
IT'S OPEN TO EVERYONE, THERE ARE NO RESTRICTIONS ON SOCIAL CLASS
YULICHI.
BRING THE MONEY YOU GET FROM SELLING THAT TO THE CEREMONY.
YOU WANT ME TO GIVE IT TO YOU THERE?
On such a festive occasion?
BRING IT AS A GIFT.

You're pretty smart too.
No one would think anything of it
Impressed
WHO
MP
I SEE
NOW, YUUICHI...
...WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO FINISH WHAT YOU STARTED?

creak
Nn..
ETERNAL
IS NOT THE
NIGHT

I'M SORRY FOR ALWAYS BEING SO SELFISH

WHAT A BEAUTIFUL FULL MOON
THAT DAY...
...ALSO HAD A BEAUTIFUL FULL MOON
WAS THERE?
YES, THERE WAS
UNDER A DAZZLING AND BEAUTIFUL
...FAR-REACHING NIGHT SKY,
STOOD IN FRONT OF ME A DAZZLING HISAYO-SAMA

AYAKO-SAN.
DURING THE WAR, I LOST EVERYTHING ONE BY ONE
FIRST MY HUSBAND AND THEN OUR HOUSE SPIRALED INTO RUINS.
EVER SINCE THEN,
I'VE FELT AS IF I WERE LIVING IN A DREAM
THE ONLY REASON WHY I'VE BEEN ABLE TO COME THIS FAR,
IS BECAUSE OF THIS STRANGE,
FAIRYTALE-LIKE
SURREAL DREAM.

CAN YOU EVER FORGIVE ME OF MY SELFISHNESS?
THERE IS NOTHING TO FORGIVE
NEVER ONCE HAVE I THOUGHT OF YOU AS SELFISH, HISAYO-SAMA
ONLY...
ONLY...
...IF AWAKENED FROM THIS DREAM,
AND THE FAIRY-TALE ENDS, WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

IT WAS...
TRULY LIKE LIVING IN A DREAM

I WILL BE HERE
AND FOR THAT MOMENT...
...IT FRIGHTENED ME..
GOOD.

rustle
I'M THIRSTY

pitter
pitter
patter
creak
yawn
flat
creak

SLIDE
THIS SMELL
MAN!! SWEET...
Yuuichi!
YUUICHI!
SHAKE
SHAKE

WHAT IS THAT?
WHAT IS THIS?
stare
TODAY'S DINNER.

squat
IS THAT FOOD CALLED "TODAY'S DINNER"?
IS IT DELICIOUS ENOUGH TO EAT EVERYDAY?
WHAT A STRANGE NAME
HANA-YAGHIKI IORI
IT'S.
HUH?
EVERYDAY YOU EAT THIS HERE DO YOU NOT?

OF COURSE I KNEW ABOUT IORI.
A NEARLY MIRACULOUS BEAUTY...
AND THE HEIR OF A FAMOUS FAMILY.
Y-
YEAH, BUT.
HOW DID YOU KNOW?
THERE IS NO ONE IN THIS TOWN WHO DID NOT KNOW OF HIM.
TO ME, HE WAS SOMEONE FAR ABOVE THE CLOUDS.
AND NEVER IN MY LIFETIME WOULD I HAVE HAD THE CHANCE TO TALK WITH HIM.
ANY ADMIRATION WOULD HAVE BEEN FROM AFAR.
MAY I HAVE SOME?
Y-
YEAH, IT'S PRETTY GOOD.
IS IT DELICIOUS?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENER-OSITY.
OKAY... ...JUST A LITTLE
MAY I EAT THIS?
ahhhh!!!

Hm..?
MAY I EAT THIS?
HEY, YUUICHI?
NO... STOP IT!
YUUICHI?
MY DINNER!
wahh!?
JUMP
WHY ARE YOU SURPRISED?
I HAVE ASKED YOU MANY TIMES ALREADY...
...IF I COULD EAT THIS OR NOT.

thump
thump
thump
gulp
I-
I DON'T MIND
YUUICHI, PLEASE CUT IT FOR ME
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT.
Hurry
EATING IN THE OFFICE, RIGHT?
GO AHEAD AND WAIT FOR ME

step
step
shuffle
shuffle
shuffle
PULL
HE'S SO CLUELESS IT'S DRIVING ME CRAZY
THAT GUY
WHAT?
toss
PUT IT ON YOU'LL CATCH A COLD

IF ON THE NIGHT BEFORE YOUR WEDDING, YOU CATCH A COLD...
I WOULDN'T KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN IT TO AYAKO-SAMA.
JUST WEAR IT
BUT I AM NOT COLD.
TO MOTHER?
YES
things are wrong enough already.
I was kidding when I said all of it.
ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN EAT THAT MUCH?
WHAT!?
HALF.
YOU CAN HAVE ALL OF IT!
HOW MUCH DO YOU WANT?

I see
I AM HUNGRY FROM ALL THE EXERCISE
Thud
I can feel the heartburn already
NO FORK?
YUUICHI
I WILL LET YOU CHOOSE WHICH BRAND OF TEA
You're telling me to get you a drink
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT
WHIRRR

EAT IT WITH CHOP-STICKS
YOU'D THINK I HAVE SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
DISPOS-ABLE ONES TOO...
I MAY NOT
CRACK
I MAY
GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT?
shuffle
shuffle
WHAT?
WEAR IT PROPER-LY
Heh.
WHAT'S THAT SU-PPOSED TO MEAN?

YOU ARE METICULOUS, YUUICHI
YOU'RE TOO CARE-LESS
EVEN THOUGH HE LOOKS SENSITIVE, HE'S ACTUALLY PRETTY STUBBORN
EXASPER-ATED?
ABOUT?
AS ALWAYS YOU THINK OF ME AS GREEDY DO YOU NOT?
I THINK YOU HAVE A SWEET TOOTH, AS ALWAYS,
BUT I'M NOT EXASPER-ATED
REALLY?
REALLY

IT'S ALL RIGHT...
...IF YOU ARE ALWAYS SURROUNDED BY SWEET AND DELICIOUS THINGS.
IT IS VERY ATTRACTIVE.
HE IS OBLIVIOUS TO THE FACT THAT HE HIMSELF...
...IS THE SWEETEST EXISTENCE
NOT ONLY FOR ME,
BUT FOR ANYONE WHO LAYS THEIR EYES ON HIM.
I AM THE SAME MAN THAT FELL FOR YOU OVER MITARASHI DANGO*...
...AND IT WAS ONLY ONE STICK, AT THAT.
IS THAT WHY, EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE GETTING MARRIED, YOU CAN'T BARE TO STAY AWAY FROM ME,
IORI?
THAT WAS FROM YANAGI-YA, IT COULDN'T BE HELPED.

...DON'T USUALLY EAT COMMONER'S SNACKS.
THAT'S BECAUSE HEIRS OF REFINED FAMILIES...
AFTER ALL, IT COULD'VE BEEN BOUGHT WITH A CHILD'S ALLOWANCE.
UNTIL THAT DAY, I HADN'T REALIZED SOMETHING THAT DELICIOUS EXISTED IN THIS WORLD
YES. YANAGI-YA'S MITARASHI DANGO ARE SUPERB!
I LOST MY PARENT'S AT A YOUNG AGE,
AND NEVER RECEIVED NEWS THAT MY ONLY RELATIVE, AN UNCLE, RETURNED FROM THE BATTLEFIELD.
WAR WASN'T THE ONLY REASON WHY I COULDN'T GO TO SCHOOL
I HAD TO PROVIDE FOR MYSELF. THOUGH IT WAS SOMETHING THAT COULD BE BOUGHT WITH A CHILD'S ALLOWANCE, AND IT WAS ONLY A MITARASHI.
IT WAS STILL A MITARASHI AND IT WAS ALL I HAD
OH...
I GAVE ONE BACK TO YOU OUT OF THE FOUR.
...AND TO BE ACCURATE, IT WASN'T A WHOLE ONE, BUT THREE-QUARTERS OF ONE

WOW IORI
ALL THIS HAPPENED OVER TEN YEARS AGO AND STILL YOU REMEMBER THE TINIEST DETAILS
OF COURSE I DO
THAT WAS WHEN WE SHARED OUR FIRST KISS, YUUIGHI
THUMP
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN?
OF COURSE NOT!
HOW COULD I EVER FORGET...

IN ORDER TO PROVIDE FOR HIM, I'VE BEEN TRYING TO SELL THE HANAYASHIKI HEIRLOOMS FOR THE BEST POSSIBLE PRICE
SINCE THEN, IORI'S FAMILY SITUATION HAS BECOME URGENT
IT ONLY TOOK THREE-QUARTERS OF A MITARASHI DANGO TO MAKE YOU MINE.
IT FELT LUCKIER THAN IF MONEY FELL FROM THE SKY.
TO THE BEST OF MY ABILITY, I WANT TO MAKE IORI HAPPY
THAT'S ALL I COULD EVER WISH FOR

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY.
I'LL GO POUR THE TEA.
THE WATER'S BOILING
CLATTER
CLATTER

DID YOU HEAR ABOUT MY MARRIAGE FROM YOUR UNCLE?
YUUICHI,

SO THIS MUST BE FUJIMIROU'S LEMON PIE.
YEAH.

YEAH,
UNCLE BROUGHT IT AS A SOUVENIR.
IORI,
DID YOU TALK TO MY UNCLE?
NO, WE JUST EXCHANGED NODS
I SEE
IT WAS OUR FIRST MEETING, BUT I KNEW IT WAS HIM
YOUR UNCLE IS FAMOUS YUUICHI I RECOGNIZED HIM THROUGH ALL THE PHOTOS I HAVE SEEN IN NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES
THE SAME COULD BE SAID ABOUT YOU, IORI

WHAT DOES YOUR UNCLE KNOW ABOUT ME?
TRUTHFULLY, THAT I'M HEAD OVER HEELS FOR YOU
Kaha-ha
BE SERIOUS
I AM SERIOUS
HIS ENCHANTINGLY BEAUTIFUL FACE,
AND AN ALMOST CELESTIAL DEMEANOR
HE DRAWS THE EYES OF ALL THE PEOPLE
LIKE THE NATURAL FASCINATION A WITHERING WORLD WOULD HARBOR FOR SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL

WILL GOING FROM LOVER TO PARAMOUR* BE TOO MUCH FOR YOU?
YUUICHI,
LOVER,
PARA-MOUR
REGARDLESS, YOU WILL BE MY ONLY ONE FOR AS LONG AS I LIVE.
MY ONLY, YUUICHI
PARA-MOUR HUH?
NOT VERY PLEASING TO THE EAR

*paramour = illicit lover

HEY,
DON'T BE SO RECK-LESS
I COULD CARE EVEN LESS ABOUT THE HANAYASHIKI NAME
AS LONG AS YOU ARE HERE
I COULD BEAR LOSING EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE WORLD
IT'S BECAUSE YOU ARE HERE, YUUICHI...
NOT THAT I WOULDN'T CARE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS TO MY FAMILY...
...IT'S NOT THAT

I CAN LIVE THROUGH ANY KIND OF HARDSHIP
AS LONG AS YOU ARE WITH ME
IORI
NO MATTER WHO I MARRY, MY FEELINGS WILL NEVER CHANGE
IORI
BEFORE, YOU SAID YOU WOULD DIE BEFORE YOU WOULD LET ME GO
YEAH, I DID

YOU SAID YOU LOVED ME THAT MUCH
I DID SAY THAT, IORI
I DO TOO.
I DO TOO, YULI-CHI.
IF YOU ARE HERE WITH ME, THEN THERE IS NOTHING MORE I COULD ASK FOR.

EVEN SO, IORI
EVEN IF YOU WERE WITH ME YOU WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO LIVE A DIRT-POOR LIFE
DON'T JOKE
THAT'S CRUEL
I'M NOT
I CAN'T AFFORD TO GIVE YOU THE LUXURIOUS LIFE YOU HAVE
IT MIGHT SEEM UNFAIR FOR YOU, BUT I'M GRATEFUL TO THE YONEKURA HOUSE
THEY CAN MAINTAIN THE GOOD LIFE YOU HAVE
AND YOUR HEART WILL STILL BE MINE
THAT'S WHY
I SUPPORT THIS MARRIAGE
THEN YOU ARE FINE BEING A PARAMOUR?

I HAVE ALWAYS
YOU HAVEN'T RISEN OR DROPPED
LOVER TO PARAMOUR, HUH?
A DROP IN THE RANKS, I GUESS
ALWAYS LOVED YOU
SINCE THE DAY WE MET, AND NOW
That's all...
I DO NOT WANT TO LOSE YOU
I'LL SACRIFICE ANYTHING

I WANT TO HOLD HIM IN MY ARMS...
EVEN IF THIS WORLD WERE TO COLLAPSE
FOREVER.
IORI'S KINDNESS...
...FEELS LIKE A MIRACLE
I DON'T KNOW WHY HE WOULD LOVE ME
IORI
I DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOU EITHER.
BUT EVEN SO...
GOOD...

NOW I CAN FULLY ENJOY THIS LEMON PIE.
THIS GUY...
Lemon pie over me...?
HOW ABOUT YOU, YUUICHI?
YOU ARE NOT GOING TO EAT?
I'M FINE,
I HAVEN'T FELT LIKE EATING SWEETS LATELY.
DON'T BE SO DISAGREE-ABLE —

HERE
IORI CAUGHT HIMSELF BEFORE EATING THE LAST DANGO
AND RETURNED IT TO ME BY MOUTH
DOES IT BRING BACK MEMORIES?
THAT WAS MY VERY FIRST KISS
I REMEMBER

I REMEMBER. THAT KISS WAS SO SUDDEN,
AT FIRST, I THOUGHT YOU WERE THAT KIND OF-
COUGH
YUUICHI?
COUGH
COUGH
whee...re

COUGH
HACK
WHAT
COUGH
COUGH
HIC...
I CAN'T...
COUGH
HACK
SNIFF
UGH
BREATHE!

yuuichi!?
thud
yuuichi
yu
AS THE CLOCK COUNTS DOWN ON THIS QUIET NIGHT BEFORE THE WEDDING, A SUDDEN AIR OF FOREBODING SURROUNDS THEM!!

GOD...
SOME GIFT THAT WAS.
WHEEDLING MONEY FROM HIS EDITOR TO BUY A MERE SOUVENIR FOR HIS "CUTE NEPHEW—

WHAT DOES HE PLAN TO SPEND HIS WEALTH ON?
I'LL SELL IT TO HIM FOR TWICE ITS WORTH
HE SHOULD BE MAKING MORE THAN ENOUGH THROUGH ROYALTIES AND COMMISSIONS
I'LL MAKE HIM BUY IT!
YESTERDAY

Yuuichi!
GH...
CLUTCH
GAG
GAG
GAG
...IF IORI HADN'T MADE ME THROW UP EVERYTHING IN MY STOMACH IMMEDIATELY.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED
SLOSH

STEP
STEP
STAND
AFTER THROWING UP, IT FELT AS IF NOTHING HAPPENED
WIPE
WIPE
CLATTER
splash
splash
splash
splash
WHAT AN INTERESTING STUNT, YUUICHI
TO CHOKE ON LEMON PIE

I THOUGHT I'D BE THE ONE TO CARE FOR IORI NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND
I won't question his choice of words
ADMIRABLE? What are you...
...TRULY ADMIRABLE ARE YOU.
TO CHOKE ON SUCH A FLUFFY AND DECADENT MOUSSE.
It's irritating that he seems to be enjoying this.
and he's even eating the rest of my lemon pie while mocking me!
But I'll just pretend I didn't notice!
He's naturally like that
WOULDN'T A PAT ON THE BACK HAVE BEEN ENOUGH TO MAKE ME COUGH IT OUT!?
ON TOP OF THAT INSTEAD OF VIOLENTLY STICKING HIS FINGERS DOWN MY THROAT,

I REALIZE HOW STRONG AND RELIABLE HIS SHOULDER WAS
DELICATE SENSITIVE AND DEPENDENT
I ALWAYS THOUGHT HIM A CREATURE THAT KNEW NOTHING OF THE REAL WORLD
HOW UNTIMELY OF ME...
TO FALL IN LOVE ALL OVER AGAIN

ONCE THERE IS A CONNECTION BETWEEN HANAYASHIKI AND YONEKURA,
IORI WILL BECOME A LORD, IN BOTH NAME AND REALITY
I, WHO QUIETLY CONTRIBUTED TO IORI'S INCOME, MIGHT HAVE SILENTLY BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE HANAYASHIKI FAMILY
BUT WITH THE UPCOMING MARRIAGE, I'LL NO LONGER BE WELCOMED IN ANY FORM
I WON'T BE ABLE TO SEE HIM AS MUCH...
NO MATTER HOW MUCH OF A FREE WANDERER IORI MAY BE
...WE CAN'T CONTINUE OUR RELATIONSHIP ANYMORE
I CAN NO LONGER VISIT IORI SIMPLY TO SEE HIS FACE...
AS LONG AS YOU ARE WITH ME
IORI'S CONFESSION BROUGHT JOY TO MY HEART
BUT EVEN SO...
HE'S GETTING MARRIED TONIGHT...
...EVEN HE'S GIVEN HIS HEART TO ME
EVERYTHING ELSE OF HIS WILL BECOME ANOTHER'S
I HAVE ALWAYS,
I COULD BEAR LOSING EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE WORLD,
SINCE THE DAY WE MET AND NOW
ALWAYS LOVED YOU...

IT COULD EVEN END WITH JUST
ON TOP OF NEVER AGAIN SEEING HIM.
Ahnn!
Ahh....
Ahh!
Nhnn...

Haa
Haa
SORRY
...I DIDN'T MEAN TO
I FEEL EXHAUSTED
YOU ARE RATHER AGGRESSIVE TONIGHT YUUICHI
IS MY MARRIAGE THAT SHOCKING TO YOU?

...KNOWING THAT I AM SO LOVED BY YOU.
IT MAKES ME HAPPY...
NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE.
YOU WERE SO CAPTIVATING
SORRY... IORI.

SO CAPTIVATING, I COULDN'T BEAR IT!
I WANTED YOU MORE THAN ANYTHING, IORI.
THE LAST TIME IT WOULD E ER
NO
EXCUSE ME

UNCLE,
I HOPE THERE WASN'T ANYTHING FUNNY IN IT
Hehehe
WHY WOULD I GO THROUGH ALL THAT TROUBLE?
NOT TO QUOTE THAT HEIR OF YOURS,
BUT CHOKING ON A LEMON PIE WAS AN INTERESTING STUNT TO PULL, YUUICHI
That's definitely not for you to say, uncle!
HAHAHA!

IT MAY HAVE LOOKED LIKE A STUNT.
BUT IT'S A PROVEN FACT...
...THAT I NEARLY DIED FROM THE LEMON PIE YOU GAVE ME!
I WANT YOU TO PAY FOR THE DAMAGES
SO? WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?
SO THAT MUST BE IT.
I WANT YOU TO BUY IT.
YES.

SURE. HOW MUCH?
YOU'D BUY IT AT WHATEVER PRICE I GIVE WITHOUT EVEN LOOKING AT IT?
UNCLE,
IT'S FROM THE SON OF THE HANAYASHIKI FAMILY. RIGHT?
WHY NOT?
IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU BROUGHT IT TO ME
NO MATTER HOW MUCH I MADE,
YOU NEVER TURNED TO ME FOR ANYTHING, YUUICHI
BUT AT THE SAME TIME I WANT TO SELL IT TO SOMEONE WHO WILL CHERISH THE MERCHANDISE
OF COURSE I WANT TO SELL TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER
FOR SOMETHING THAT IS BEING SOLD RELUCTANTLY
GIVES IT MORE REASON NOT TO SELL IT TO JUST ANYONE

ARE YOU WARNING ME...
TO CHERISH IT ONCE BOUGHT?
YES
AND INCIDENTALLY, YOU THOUGHT I WAS ONE NOT TO TREASURE AN ANTIQUE HEIRLOOM?
Hmmm
DO I REALLY SEEM LACKING IN EMOTION?
YES, YOU DO
EVEN AS AN AMEYAMA KYUUSAI WHO WRITES GHOST STORIES FILLED WITH EMOTION?
YES

YOU SEEM TO HAVE AN ATTACHMENT FOR THINGS...
...WITHOUT SHAPE OR FORM, OVER THINGS THAT DO.
YES.
UNCLE SEEMS TO BE THE TYPE OF PERSON
TO THROW AWAY EVERYTHING ON A WHIM,
AND THEN SUDDENLY DISAPPEAR.
I SEE,
SO I HAVE NO EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT...

IS THE HANAYA-SHIKI SON COLD-HEARTED AS WELL?
IORI'S NOT COLD-HEARTED
IN A WAY IT REMINDS ME OF IORI.
YOU TWO ARE LIKE FATHER AND SON
YOUR FEW AND SCATTERED EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS MAKE YOU AND IORI...
VERY SIMILAR.
BUT I AM?
LIKE I SAID BEFORE. PLEASE TREAT IT WITH CARE
AND DON'T GIVE IT AWAY,
LIKE YOU DID WITH THE LEMON PIE
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT

OTHER THINGS?
SO?
WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER THINGS?
HAS ANY OTHER STRANGE THINGS HAPPENED?
BESIDES CHOKING ON HIGH-CLASS EUROPEAN SWEETS,
SARCASTIC AS ALWAYS, UNCLE
I don't have any idea for your novel
STRANGE

THINGS
...DREAM I'D KEEP HAVING.
I'VE...
NO MATTER WHAT.
I WANT THAT.
NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES....
...I WANT TO GET IT, NO MATTER WHAT.
WHAT'S THE MATTER, YUUICHI?

NO STRANGE THINGS...
NOTHING
OH, NO...
...HAVE HAPPENED
NONE
AND NO CHANGE IN THE HANAYASHIKI SON?
AHH.
I SEE
NO

ALL RIGHT
WAIT HERE
I'LL GET THE MONEY

THIS WAY PLEASE FOR THE BRIDE'S CHANGE OF DRESS
ICHI
SISTER...

Iori!
Stagger
I'M ALL RIGHT.
JUST A DIZZY SPELL.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? GET AHOLD OF YOURSELF!
I TOLD YOU NOT TO GO OUT THE NIGHT BEFORE YOUR WEDDING CEREMONY!
YOU PROBABLY CAUGHT INFLUENZA FROM HIM!
Wipe
YUUICHI HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IT

EVERYTIME, REGARDLESS OF WHAT HAPPENS,
HE NEVER SEEMS ILL OF THAT MAN.
So stubborn
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE PARTY, JUST TAKE A MOMENT TO REST.
IORI,
IS THERE A ROOM WE MAY BORROW?

WHAT'S GOING ON?
THE WEDDING IS TONIGHT, ISN'T IT?
WASN'T THE PUBLIC CEREMONY IN THE COURTYARD?
There's no sign of anyone here
Did that lion trick me?
I WORE MY BEST SUIT
I EVEN GOT A DECENT SUM OF MONEY FROM UNCLE

HE MAY BE A LITTLE ECCENTRIC, BUT IORI WOULD NEVER TRICK ME EVEN AS A JOKE
WHICH MEANS...
Dash
chatter
chatter

BUT I SUPPOSE THAT'S JUST HOW HE NATURALLY IS.
chatter
chatter
I WOULD NEVER HAVE THOUGHT THE HUSBAND WOULD BE THE ONE TAKEN IN
I THOUGHT TAKING A WIFE MEANT THE CEREMONIES WERE TO BE HELD AT THE HANAYASHIKI HOUSE...
HE FORGOT TO TELL ME THE MOST IMPORTANT THING
BUT IF IORI WERE TO WED INTO THE YONEKURA HOUSE AND BECOME THE SON-IN-LAW!!
来倉
花屋敷
卿
NO WAY IN HELL WOULD I BE ABLE TO SEE HIM.
THE YONEKURA HEIR HAVING A LOVER? IMPOSSIBLE

HIS YO IS OF THE YONEKURA HOUSE
BUT HER NIECE MARI IS THE ADOPTED CHILD OF HIS YO'S UNCLE
SHE IS NOT THE TRUE HEIRESS TO THE YONEKURA HOUSE
WAIT A MINUTE
TO A HOUSE THAT TREASURES ITS BLOODLINE, MARRIAGE TO MARI WOULD BE MEANINGLESS

THEN, WHAT'S HAPPENING?
IS HE GETTING MARRIED TO?
WHO...
IS THERE A ROOM WE MAY BORROW,

HISAYO-SAMA?

GRAB
ROKUGOU YUUICHI!
I NEED TO TALK TO YOU

HUH?
WHAT DID YOU DO TO IORI LAST NIGHT?
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN TO IORI?
I AM THE ONE ASKING YOU WHAT HAPPENED
YOU HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING TO HIM THAT'S OUT OF THE ORDINARY?

IORI DID!?
JUST NOW, HE COLLAPSED
HE'S BEEN SICK ALL DAY
EVER SINCE HE GOT HOME FROM YOUR PLACE THIS MORNING, HE'S BEEN UNDER THE WEATHER
HE WAS BARELY ABLE TO DELIVER HIS CELEBRATORY SPEECH
HE MAY SEEM FRAIL ON THE OUTSIDE,
BUT VITALITY IS ONE OF IORI'S DISTINCTIVE TRAITS.
EVEN WHEN THE ENTIRE HOUSEHOLD FELL SICK WITH THE FLU, HE'D BE THE ONLY ONE IN PERFECT CONDITION.
I... WAS AWARE OF THAT.
HE'S STRONG TO HUNGER, AS WELL.
I KNEW THAT TOO.

HE'S ALMOST LIKE AN OVER-TRAINED DOG...
...THE WAY HE ONLY TAKES FOOD FROM EITHER MOTHER OR ME.
EVEN WITH HIS SANSAN KUDO* CUP...
...PRETENDING TO DRINK, HE LEFT IT UNTOUCHED.
DOESN'T IT MAKE YOU LAUGH?
YEAH...
SANSAN KUDO CUP
SOMETHING I EXPECTED,
BUT JUST HEARING IT...
...BRINGS PAIN TO MY CHEST.
SO WHEN I HEARD THAT IORI STOLE YOUR MITARASHI DANGO*,
BOTH MOTHER AND I WERE STONISHED.
WITHOUT KNOWING ANYTHING.
...I ONCE HARBORED A DEEP GRUDGE AGAINST IORI FOR EATING ALL OF MY PRECIOUS DANGO, AS IF IT WERE NOTHING.

*sansankudo = three nuptial (or otherwise celebrational) cups of sake, poured in three and drunken in three sips by the bride and groom
*mitarashi dango = kneaded balls of rice flour and water, covered with a sauce of soy sauce and sugar

A DOCTOR?
HAVE YOU GOTTEN HIM CHECKED BY A DOCTOR?
YOU WERE ALWAYS SOMEWHAT SPECIAL,
SO I ALWAYS MADE AN EXCEPTION FOR YOU.
BUT NOT THIS TIME.
SEEING IORI LIKE THAT TROUBLES ME EVEN MORE
I HAD THEM QUIETLY CALL THE YONEKURAS' PRIVATE DOCTOR.
IT'S OVER-EXHAUSTION
THERE'S NOTHING ELSE WRONG WITH HIM
BUT DOES IT MAKE SENSE FOR A STRONG BOY LIKE HIM TO COLLAPSE FROM EXHAUSTION AFTER JUST ONE NIGHT?
WHAT COULD HE HAVE GONE THROUGH TO MAKE HIM THAT WAY?

"I FEEL EXHAUSTED."
"YOU ARE RATHER AGGRESSIVE TONIGHT, YUUICHI."
"IS MY MARRIAGE THAT SHOCKING TO YOU?"
SO IT WASN'T JUST ME WHEN I THOUGHT HE LOOKED PALE.
BUT...
I REALLY HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY.
...BUT IT WASN'T THE FIRST TIME.
I ADMIT, LAST NIGHT I EMBRACED HIM AS IF DEVOURING HIM.
"——————AND NO CHANGE."

"AND NO CHANGE IN THE HANAYASHIKI SON?"

"I DON'T EAT SWEETS."

"YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE IN THE FAMILY WHO LIKES SWEETS, YUICHI..."

"...BECAUSE YOU'RE ABNORMAL."

"I DON'T NEED IT."

"I DON'T WANT TO SHORTEN MY LIFESPAN."

FUJIMIROU'S LEMON PIE.

WHAT'S THAT?

YOUR UNCLE... THE AUTHOR, AMEYAMA KYUUSAI?
I THINK MY UNCLE MAY KNOW SOMETHING.
WE ATE IT TOGETHER...
...THE GIFT MY UNCLE GAVE US
I SUDDENLY STARTED CHOKING ON IT AND ALMOST DIED
BUT NOTHING HAPPENED TO IORI
THAT'S ALL THAT COMES TO MIND.
YOU THINK HE GOT SICK FROM A LEMON PIE?
NOT FOOD POISONING.
REMEMBER...
...THE DOCTOR'S DIAGNOSIS WAS OVER EXHALISTION.

SOMETHING...
IS DIFFERENT FROM YESTERDAY
THOUGH YESTERDAY AND THE DAY BEFORE WERE NO DIFFERENT
AND EVEN THOUGH IT FALL HAD THE SAME SCENT
THAT'S ALL I CAN THINK OF.
THINGS HAVE CHANGED DRASTICALLY SINCE THEN.
I'M GOING TO SEE MY UNCLE.
THAT'S FINE
YOU PROBABLY KNOW ALREADY, BUT...

IORI WILL NO LONGER BE IN THE HANAYASHIKI HOUSE
HE WEDDED HISAYO-SAMA
FROM THIS DAY FORWARD HE IS THE HEIR OF THE YONEKURA HOUSE
HE PROBABLY...

WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO SEE YOU AGAIN

Does the key to this unsolvable mystery lie in the hands of his uncle, Kyunsai?
Next issue, the climax is reached!!
Chara
TBC

pant
pant
pant
IT'LL BE FASTER IF I GO THROUGH THE HILLS
RUSTLE

...TO FIND OUT WHAT EXACTLY IS HAPPENING!
I NEED TO SEE UNCLE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
pant
pant
pant
.....
THIS AREA IS ONE I'VE KNOWN WELL SINCE CHILDHOOD
AND FOR A CHILD LIKE ME, WHO DIDN'T HAVE MUCH TO EAT, IT WAS LIKE A TREASURE MOUNTAIN

Iori!?
You surprised me!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
IT'S AMAZING YOU KNEW WHERE I WAS.
NOR DID WE AGREE TO MEET THERE
IT'S HARD TO SEE AROUND THIS AREA.
WAS JUST LOOKING FOR SOME PERSIMMONS TO EAT.
AND I WAS ON TOP OF A TREE.

YUUICHI,
DO YOU LOVE ME?
HE'S ALWAYS FULL OF SURPRISES
HE THINKS NOTHING OF GOING TO HIS LOVER THE NIGHT BEFORE HIS WEDDING AND RETURNING IN THE MORNING
HE KEEPS BRINGING HANAYASHIKI HEIRLOOMS FOR ME TO SELL
AND THOUGH THERE IS NO NEED

I LOVE YOU, YUUICHI
HUH?
MORE THAN MOTHER,
OR SISTER.
I LOVE YOU THE MOST.

BACK THEN, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE DEEP MEANING TO THIS.
BUT I WAS STILL VERY HAPPY.
H-HERE
YOU CAN HAVE IT.
MEANING
IORI LOVED ME MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE IN THE WORLD.
SINCE THEN

"HE PROBABLY... WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO SEE YOU AGAIN."
THE SWEET SHOP BY THE ALLEY
THE SMALL RAVINE
THIS HILL,
THE ABANDONED LOT
FOR US WHO GREW UP HERE, EVERY LITTLE PLACE WAS FILLED WITH OUR MEMORIES.
BUT
IT HAD TO HAPPEN, AFTER ALL.

IT WAS RARE FOR IORI TO SMILE
YOU CAN HAVE IT HERE
THAT'S WHY...
JUST HIS SMILE MADE MY HEART FULL OF HAPPINESS.
THIS PERSIMMON LOOKS DELICIOUS
FROM THAT MOMENT
I HAD FALLEN HOPELESSLY IN LOVE WITH IORI
DOESN'T IT?

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN.
I SHOULD HAVE BEEN PREPARED.
"HE PROBABLY WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO SEE YOU AGAIN."
I KNEW THIS DAY WOULD COME
SOMEWHERE IN MY MIND.
JUST AS HE THOUGHT OF HAVING ME SELL HANAYASHIKI HEIRLOOMS
IORI USED ANY REASON HE COULD GET TO SEE ME.
I FEEL HE'D MAKE ANY EXCUSE TO SEE ME
BUT THIS IS IORI

SO IT WILL PROBABLY BE ALL RIGHT.
AND AGAIN.
AGAIN.
HE'S HARDIER THAN HE LOOKS
HE CAME TO SEE ME
EVEN THOUGH,
I MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO SEE HIM AT THE MOMENT,
JUST LIKE THAT DAY...
WHEN HE APPEARED OUT OF NOWHERE UNDER THAT PERSIMMON TREE ON THE HILL.
IORI WOULD DO EVERYTHING IN HIS POWER TO SEE ME AGAIN
BUT SOMEDAY, I'LL SEE HIM AGAIN

IN SOME ASTONISHING WAY,
IORI WILL COME TO ME

SLIDE
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
WHAT'S WRONG YUUICHI?
YOU LOOK AGITATED
YOU'RE SOAKED WITH SWEAT. YOU MUST BE THIRSTY
WANT ME TO POUR SOME TEA?
WAIT. I GUESS WATER WOULD BE BETTER.

I WANT NEITHER.
I HAVE SOMETHING I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU, UNCLE.
OH?
WHAT DO YOU KNOW?
WHAT I KNOW,
hm?
THAT'S A RATHER BROAD QUESTION

THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS THAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND. I DON'T KNOW HOW ELSE TO ASK YOU.
A MYSTIC RACE...
THAT CANNOT STOMACH SWEETS
THOSE OMINOUS DREAMS,
AND YESTERDA
INCIDEN
THOUGH
WAS
THE SY
BODY
YOU ASKED ME ABOUT ANY CHANGE IN THE HANAYASHIKI SON, DID YOU NOT?
WHAT DID YOU MEAN BY THAT?

THERE WAS.
IORI'S OLDER SISTER WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE CHANGE IN HIS CONDITION.
BUT NOT THIS TIME.
SEEING IORI LIKE THAT TROUBLES ME EVEN MORE
EXACTLY WHAT IT MEANS
I SEE
WELL THEN.
HOW SHALL I BEGIN?

THIS ISN'T THE TIME FOR JOKES, UNCLE!
FROM THE BEGIN-NING
THEN I'LL START WITH THE ROOT OF YOUR NAME, YUUICHI
I'M NOT JOKING
YUUICHI, WRITTEN AS THE 'ONLY ONE.'
THAT WASN'T JUST ANY NAME
YOU WERE THE SINGLE EXCEPTION IN OUR RACE, YUUICHI
EXCEPTION?

YOU THOUGHT I DIDN'T EAT SWEETS BECAUSE I DIDN'T LIKE THE TASTE, DIDN'T YOU?
BUT THAT IS NOT THE CASE.
I DON'T KNOW WHY,
BUT FOR SOME REASON IT WILL SHORTEN MY LIFE IF I DO
YOU KNOW THAT FIRST-HAND NOW, DON'T YOU?
YOU WERE THE ONLY CHILD
...WITH UNAWAKENED BLOOD
UNAWAK-ENED...
...BLOOD?

SOME-WHAT...
BUT FOR SOME REASON YOU WERE DIFFERENT
ALL MEMBERS OF THE CLAN ARE LIKE THAT.
ALMOST LIKE
A NORMAL HUMAN YOU WERE ABLE TO EAT ANYTHING
ALMOST LIKE A NORMAL HUMAN?
A NORMAL
HUMAN?
FOR YOUR SLEEPING BLOOD TO HAVE AWAKENED,
MEANS YOU'VE INCLUDED YOUR LUCKY SELF AMONG THE REST OF OUR CLAN YUUICHI

I'M NOT LUCKY AT ALL
SOMETHING
IS WRONG
THE MYSTERY NAGGING IN THE BACK OF MY MIND IS ABOUT TO BE SOLVED
I SHOULD BE FEELING SATISFIED
BUT WHY DO I HAVE SUCH AN OMINOUS FEELING?
THAT'S BECAUSE...
...YOUR SENSES ARE FUNCTIONING NORMALLY, YUUICHI.
OUR CLAN IS TRULY AN OMINOUS ONE.

We are a clan that survives by feeding off the lives of others.
WHAT?
WHAT DO YOU...?
I'M SAYING. IN ORDER FOR US TO LIVE. OUR BLOOD FORCES US TO STEAL THE VITALITY OF OTHERS

OF COURSE, WE DO NOT DO THAT TO NUMEROUS, RANDOM INDIVIDUALS
UNCLE KYUUSAI YOU CAN'T JUST-
JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE A MYSTERY WRITER,
THAT'S A CRUEL JOKE
THAT CAN'T BE
YOU TWO WILL BE ATTRACTED TO EACH OTHER.
WE HAVE SOMEONE LIKE A 'LOVER'

YOU TWO WILL ATTRACT EACH OTHER. ALMOST AS IF BY FATE
THAT CAN'T BE!
PLEASE STOP JOKING WITH ME!
NEITHER PARTY UNDER-STANDS
WHY THEY DESIRE EACH OTHER SO
BUT NO ONE ELSE WILL DO
"AS LONG AS YOU ARE WITH ME"
"I COULD BEAR LOSING EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE WORLD"
YOU ONLY NEED EACH OTHER.

SO, CONVENIENTLY FOR YOU,
YOUR MATE WILL WILLINGLY HAND OVER HIS LIFE
TORI
"IF YOU ARE HERE WITH ME, THEN THERE IS NOTHING MORE I COULD ASK FOR."
YOU NEVER NEED TO REQUEST IT
YOUR LOVER WILL OFFER IT
stop it!
SO DON'T CONFUSE THINGS YUUICHI

IT IS MERELY A DELUSIONAL RAPTURE BETWEEN A PREDATOR...
WHAT IS BETWEEN YOU IS NOT LOVE
...AND ITS PREY.
NO!
IORI AND I ARE NOT LIKE THAT!
IS THAT SO?
BUT IN REALITY, THERE WAS A "CHANGE" IN THE SON, WASN'T THERE?

TO SAY THESE FEELING ARE NOT LOVE
BUT...
STILL...
THESE OVERWHELMING FEELINGS TOWARDS IORI...
...are not of Love--?
YOU WILL NOT BE UNABLE TO LIVE WITHOUT HIS VITAL ENERGY...
WHETHER YOU CHOOSE TO BELIEVE IT OR NOT...
...YOUR BLOOD HAS ALREADY AWAKENED AND YOU WILL STEAL THE LIFE OF THE HANAYASHIKI SON
THERE IS NO WAY I CAN DO THAT!
WHAT MEANING IS THERE IN A LIFE LIVED AT THE EXPENSE OF IORI

IT IS THE SAME WITH ANIMALS.
PREDATOR AND PREY.
I DON'T KNOW FOR WHAT REASON, BUT THAT SON WAS ALSO BORN THIS WAY.
IN OTHER WORDS, YUUICHI,
TO HAVE A LOVER MEANS THAT THERE ARE THOSE BORN TO STEAL LIFE AND OTHERS BORN TO HAVE IT STOLEN.
ALTHOUGH YOUR BLOOD HAD NO YET AWAKENED—
—YOU BOTH STILL MET.
IORI...
—AND I?
THAT IS WHY YOU TWO MET AS YOU DID.

I MAY BE AN AUTHOR, BUT I AM MAKING NONE OF THIS UP.
THE REASON WHY YOU DON'T KNOW YOUR PARENTS,
AND HAVE MET NO ONE FROM YOUR CLAN IS TO KEEP BOUNDARIES SET.
IT'S ALMOST LIKE HOW ANIMALS DO NOT SET FOOT IN EACH OTHER'S TERRITORIES
DO YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU'RE TELLING ME, UNCLE?
THEN WHY ARE YOU HERE, UNCLE?
IN CASE YOUR BLOOD AWOKE
IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW THE RULES OF THE CLAN THERE COULD HAVE BEEN INCONVENIENCES.
I'M SOMEONE YOU MIGHT CALL A GUARDIAN SENT BY THE CLAN.

MAYBE
I HAVE NO IDEA
THEN MY PARENTS ARE ALIVE?
THOSE TOMBSTONES ARE JUST FOR SHOW?
HOW I SHOULD TALK ABOUT MY BLOOD RELATIVES, RIGHT?
BUT MY MOTHER IS YOUR SISTER
THAT'S NOT
YOU ARE RELATED BY BLOOD!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I DON'T KNOW
BUT FROM WHAT I CAN GUESS, SHE IS PROBABLY DEAD
SHE IS MY SISTER, WHO GAVE BIRTH TO THE ONLY EXCEPTION OF OUR CLAN
YOU
SHE HAD CHOSEN A DEVIOUS WAY OF LIFE EVEN AS A MEMBER OF THIS CLAN.
AND AS FAR AS THAT GOES, NO ONE CAN ASSURE HER SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

I ALSO DON'T...
...WE BOTH DON'T.
I DON'T UNDER-STAND
AFTER ALL, YOUR LIFE IS YOUR OWN
EITHER YOU TAKE THE SON'S LIFE,
OR YOU PERISH
CHOOSE THE PATH YOU WISH TO TAKE
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO
FROM NOW ON
WHO KNOWS
DO AS YOU LIKE

THAT'S UNREASONABLE.
BUT YOU'VE HEARD IT, HAVEN'T YOU?
THIS IS TOO ABSURD, I CAN'T JUST BELIEVE.
THE VOICE OF AWAKENING... INSIDE OF YOU
VOICE OF AWAKENING?
flinch
NO MATTER WHAT...
my voice...?
I WANT TO HOLD IT, NO MATTER WHAT...
NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES
I WANT THAT.
SEE?

Swishhh
JUST...
A BAD DREAM
IT WASN'T...

NOW....
THAT'S THE END OF MY STORY.
I'M SORRY, BUT TOMORROW IS THE DEAD-LINE FOR MY BOOK.
IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY MORE QUESTIONS, CAN I SEND YOU ON YOUR WAY?

I
I'M STEALING
THAT...
WAS WHAT SHE MEANT.
BUT THIS IS STEALING HIS LIFE.
I'M
"But does it make sense for a strong boy like him to collapse from exhaustion after just one night?
What could he have gone through to make him that way?"
BUT...
...NOW I UNDERSTAND.
I ONLY DID WHAT I NORMALLY DO
ACTING ON MY FEELINGS OF ADORATION TOWARDS IORI, I
I HELD HIM

EVEN IF I KNOW NOTHING
THE TRUTH IS, BECAUSE OF ME, IORI COLLAPSED
KNEW, NOTHING
IF THIS WAS GOING TO HAPPEN
TAKING HIS LIFE AWAY FROM HIM
IF I KNEW THIS WAS GOING TO HAPPEN, I WOULD HAVE EMBRACED IORI MANY MORE TIMES
I SHOULD HAVE OVER-LAPPED MY BODY WITH HIS
ENOUGH TO DRIVE ME INSANE

I CAN NO LONGER TOUCH HIM
IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS LIFE
THERE'S NO WAY I CAN
rustle..
THAT WAS WHAT UNCLE WAS TALKING ABOUT.
IT WASN'T ABOUT SOCIAL CLASS.
"TROUBLE-SOME PARTNER"

WHAT AM I TO DO?
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO, IORI?
CAN'T I THINK OF THIS AS A CRUEL JOKE BY UNCLE?
IS HE STILL SLEEPING SOMEWHERE IN THIS MANSION?
IORI...
I'VE COME BACK WITHOUT THINKING

the voice of awakening

AM I REALLY
THERE WAS NOTHING WRONG...
UNTIL YESTERDAY...
...GOING TO TAKE YOUR LIFE?
...WE WERE JUST LOVERS
UNTIL YESTERDAY
UNCLE DESTROYED EVERYTHING I HAD
HE EVEN DESTROYED
THESE FEELINGS THAT I THOUGHT WERE LOVE
WHAT IS THE TRUTH?
IS EVERYTHING TRUE?

IORI,
JUST AN ILLUSION?
OR IS EVERYTHING...
THEY'RE SAYING YOUR FEELINGS TOWARDS ME
ARE NOT THOSE OF LOVE EITHER
"SO, DON'T CONFUSE THINGS, YUUICHI
WHAT IS BETWEEN YOU LOVE
IT IS MERELY A
AND
THE WORLD IS JUST A BLUR
MY VISION IS BECOMING SMUDGED.

YUUICHI?
SLAP

WHAT IS WRONG, YUUICHI?
ARE YOU CRYING?
OF COURSE NOT.
IORI
IS THE PARTY IN THE GARDEN OVER?
SHOULD A BRIDEGROOM LIKE YOU BE HERE?
HE LOOKS TIRED
SHOULDN'T YOU BE RESTING?

THAT'S FOOLISH
IF THEY TOLD YOU TO REST YOU SHOULD HAVE
YOU CAN SEE ME ANY TIME
THEY TOLD ME TO STAY AND REST,
BUT I SNEAKED OUT WHILE THEY WERE NOT LOOKING
I HAD A FEELING YOU WERE OUT HERE.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
HUH?

ARE YOU NOT PLANNING TO GO SOME-WHERE?
YUUICHI,
WELL, I'LL BE GOING BACK TO THE ROOM...
THAT IS NOT WHAT I MEANT
HE...

I DID,
BUT THAT WAS A META-PHOR
I JUST MEANT...
...THAT'S HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU.
AND YOU SAID YOU WOULD DIE BEFORE YOU WOULD LET ME GO.
—DID YOU NOT YUUICHI?
I HAVE TOLD YOU BEFORE
I COULD BARE LOSING EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD FOR YOU
IT MAY BE THAT WAY FOR YOU.
BUT FOR ME, IT WAS LITERAL.
IF I LOSE YOU, THERE IS NO REASON LEFT FOR ME TO LIVE

HE ALWAYS
STRAIGHT AT ME
ALWAYS LOOKS ME IN THE EYE
EACH AND EVERY TIME.
I HAD AN UNEASY FEELING, YUUICHI
IORI...
I HAD A FEELING I WOULD NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN, YUUICHI
DON'T COME ANY CLOSER!

IS THAT WHY...
THAT'S JUST AN ILLUSION
IT'S JUST YOU, IORI
I DON'T DESERVE THOSE FEELINGS FROM YOU
...YOU ARE LEAVING ME?
YOU'RE THE HEIR OF THE YONEKURA HOUSE
STOP AND LOOK AT REALITY, IORI

AND TODAY FOR THE FIRST TIME
I'VE SEEN HIS TEARS
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME.
IORI
ALL THIS TIME,
I'VE CHERISHED HIM SO MUCH
I'VE MADE HIM CRY
IORI
Iori.

THEN,
I WILL FOLLOW YOU
WHA...?
BUT...
I'M SORRY,
IOR!
I...
NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE IN THE WORLD,
I WILL COME FIND YOU
DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOU

YOU KNOW, DO YOU NOT?
NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE, I CAN SOMEHOW ALWAYS FIND YOU.
IORI...
SO IT WAS!
YUUICHI.
AND WHEN YOU HAVE GROWN WEARY OF CAT-AND-MOUSE...
...LET US GO HOME TOGETHER.

IORI...

HISAYO-SAMA?
GOOD DAY, AYAKO-SAN- OH...
OR SHOULD I SAY...
MOTHER?
OH, PLEASE, DON'T CALL ME THAT.

A POSTCARD FROM IORI-SAN
FROM WHERE?
THAT IS?
I GUESS IORI IS THE TYPE TO WRITE OFTEN.
BUT HE SEEMS WELL
THE STAMP IS FADED SO I CAN'T REALLY TELL,
YES, BUT I NEVER EXPECTED...
IORI TO RUN AWAY FROM HOME THE DAY AFTER THE WEDDING
Mmhm.
ALTHOUGH YOU'RE HIS MOTHER, IT SEEMS YOU ARE STILL DISCOVERING NEW THINGS ABOUT YOUR SON

I GUESS I'LL HAVE NO LUCK WITH CHILDREN
I THOUGHT I'D FINALLY BE ABLE TO HAVE HIM NEAR ME BUT HE'S DISAPPEARED LIKE A WISP OF SMOKE
IT WAS UNFORTUNATE FOR YOU. AFTER GOING THROUGH ALL THAT TROUBLE TO PLAN IT
INDEED
chuckle
BUT
IF HE IS DOING WELL, IT IS MORE THAN I CAN WISH FOR
AFTER ALL HE HAD PROMISED TO RETURN SOMEDAY
IN THE LETTER HE LEFT BEHIND

HISAYO-SAMA.
...WHEN DID IORI SAY HE WOULD RETURN?
WHO KNOWS.
IT SEEMS LIKE THE DECISION IS UP TO ROKUGOU-SAN.
WHAT A STRANGE PAIR THEY ARE.
AREN'T THEY?
THANK YOU FOR READING!! KEEP WATCHING FOR GOTOU-SENSEI AND MINAZA-SENSEI'S NEW WORKS IN THE FUTURE!! ♡
Chara
end